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SUBJECT: SFRC STAFFDEL TAKES IN THE PANOPLY OF US ASSISTANCE TO ARMENIA

REF: STATE 72561

¶1. (U) From May 22 to 26, SFRC stafdel Paul Foldi and Marik String visited Armenia. After four days of briefings, meetings, presentations and site visits, Foldi and String -- accompanied to most meetings by just a driver and interpreter, per their request -- reported that they were pleased with what they saw with regards to how USG assistance funding has been and is being used in Armenia.

¶2. (U) Foldi and String had a packed schedule that had them meet with representatives of the nine assistance-related agencies at post, discuss US Foreign Assistance with the Minister of Finance and Economy (MFE) and visit nearly 20 implementers and project sites in Yerevan and throughout northern Armenia. They also had a CDA-hosted dinner with deputy ministers from the finance and energy ministries, as well as other meetings with international donors, democracy implementing organizations and the AmCham board. Foldi and String made site visits to U.S. assistance activities at USAID health and governance project locations, USDA agricultural sites, Armenia's EXBS-enhanced border facilities and future MCC irrigation and road projects.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: The staffdel visit was a good opportunity to show what we have done with taxpayers' funds. Though, as we discovered during their visit, the staffers' real intention was to study the "F" process -- something that will only come to full fruition beginning with the FY08 budget process -- Foldi and String seemed impressed with the variety and scope of USG-sponsored assistance programs in Armenia and their value for money.

¶4. (SBU) Unfortunately, reftel guidance cable did not reach us until two days after the staffdel's departure. We wish we had received this guidance in time to inform our management of the staffdel's visit, but we believe that the visit was nonetheless successful and fortuitously did not violate the proscriptions in reftel. END COMMENT.

GODFREY